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BULGARIA: Opposition Growing More Radical

The anti-Communist opposition appears increasingly divided over how to conduct negotiations with the regime, but the Communists are not likely to benefit significantly from any split. The Union of Democratic Forces, the opposition's umbrella group, yesterday suspended roundtable talks until Monday when the regime refused to give it equal access to the media and a headquarters building. What appears to be a majority of UDF members have vowed to break away if the current UDF negotiating team is not replaced today.

Former Bulgarian leader Zhivkov was arrested yesterday and charged with inciting ethnic hatred, embezzling public funds, and abuse of office.

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Comment: The UDF may avoid a split temporarily by electing new negotiation leaders, but the opposition appears certain to break into moderate and more radical groups. A radical faction would be led by the increasingly powerful independent trade union Podkrepa and undoubtedly would challenge the regime with protests and strikes. Communist Party leader Mladenov's transparent attempt to further distance himself from the former regime by arresting Zhivkov may open a Pandora's box. More serious issues likely to implicate some current party leaders—including the 1978 murder of exiled dissident Georgi Markov—may be raised.

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ROMANIA: FSN Cancels Referendum on Communist Party

The National Salvation Front is demonstrating a pattern of indecision on key issues and sharp internal divisions. The Front yesterday canceled a 28 January national referendum on the legality of the discredited Communist Party and on the death penalty because of criticism from many in the Front that the move was undemocratic and made only under pressure from demonstrators last Friday. Front-controlled media have identified Vice President Mazilu—who had sided with the protesters—as a former Securitate officer and accused him of manipulating the crowds in an effort to wrest power from President Iliescu and Prime Minister Roman. Front spokesman Brucan reported the government will confiscate the Communist Party's assets. (C NF)

Comment: The provisional leadership's quarrels and policy reversals will erode its credibility. The reversal of its promise to outlaw the Communist Party and hold a referendum on capital punishment is likely to trigger a new round of protests. Mazilu is unlikely to survive the controversy. Because of growing public cynicism, confiscation of the party's property probably will gain the Front little credit and probably will increase popular concern that it will use the assets to tighten its grip on power.

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